

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

Examiner Walsh is kindly thanked for pointing out the inadvertent typographical error at the top of page six of the application. The specification has been amended to correct such error. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection to the disclosure is respectfully requested.

By way of this Amendment, Claim 12 has been cancelled, Claims 1 and 2 remain canceled, and new Claims 18-23 are presented for consideration. Thus, the claims currently pending in this application are Claims 3-11 and 13-23, with Claims 11, 18 and 20 being the only independent claims.

The most recent Official Action sets forth a rejection of independent Claim 11, and various dependent claims, based on the disclosure in U.S. Patent No. 6,588,813 to *Marcarini et al.* To more clearly set forth differences between aspects of the invention at issue here and the disclosure in *Marcarini et al.*, independent Claim 11 has been amended. Thus, independent Claim 11 now recites that the door handle device comprises a frame fixed to the inside of the outer panel of the vehicle door, and a grip provided on the frame from outside of the vehicle. The grip includes a sensor electrode which detects a user approaching the vehicle door based on a variation of capacitance. In addition, a circuit is electrically connected to the sensor electrode and is mounted in the frame so that the circuit is positioned between the frame and the outer panel of the door.

Marcarini et al. discloses a vehicle door handle that includes a connecting structure 4 secured to the inside of a door panel 3 and a control lever 5 hinged to the connecting structure. A magnetic device 7 detects the presence of a user's hand

close to the control lever 5 and supplies a signal to a control unit 8. The magnetic device 7 includes a wire aerial 12 having one portion 13 positioned in the control lever 5 and another portion 14 housed inside a seat on the connecting structure 4. One end of a metal conducting strip 19 is connected to the wire aerial 12 and the other end of the wire conducting strip 19 is connected to an interface circuit in the connecting structure 4 which supplies a signal to a control unit 8.

As noted above, Claim 11 has been amended to recite that the grip provided on the frame from outside of the vehicle includes a sensor electrode that detects a user approaching the vehicle door based on variation of capacitance. *Marcarini et al* does not disclose that the control lever 5 includes a sensor electrode that detects a user approaching the vehicle door based on variation in capacitance. It is thus respectfully submitted that the door handle device recited in independent Claim 11, and dependent claims 3-10, is patentably distinguishable over the disclosure contained in *Marcarini et al*.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejections of record and allowance of this application are earnestly solicited.

New independent Claim 18 recites that the door handle device comprises a frame fixed to the inside of the vehicle door outer panel, and a grip provided or mounted on the frame and located at the outside of the vehicle door. In addition, the grip includes a sensor electrode which detects a user approaching the vehicle door and which is electrically connected to a signaling circuit integrally provided with the frame. The signaling circuit comprises a sensor detection portion which transmits a signal in response to the sensor electrode detecting a user approaching the vehicle door. Further, a connecting member connects the sensor electrode to the signaling circuit.

New independent Claim 20 defines that the door handle device comprises the frame, the grip, the signaling circuit and the connecting member. Instead of reciting that the signaling circuit comprises a sensor detection portion as set forth in Claim 18, Claim 20 recites that the signaling circuit comprises a transmitting portion which transmits a request signal requesting receipt of an identification signal from a device carried by the user before operation of the grip by the user.

The vehicle door handle disclosed in *Marcarini et al* includes the magnetic device 7 connected to the control unit 8 by way of an interface circuit. However, there is no disclosure in *Marcarini et al* of providing a sensor detection portion or a transmitting portion in the frame that is fixed to the inside of the vehicle door outer panel as recited in independent Claims 18 and 20. It is thus respectfully submitted that independent Claims 18 and 20, as well as the various dependent claims, are patentably distinguishable over the disclosure contained in *Marcarini et al*.

Should any questions arise in connection with this application or should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference with the undersigned would be helpful in resolving any remaining issues pertaining to this application the undersigned respectfully requests that he be contacted at the number indicated below.

Respectfully submitted,

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